

CLEAN VESSEL ACT

A practical guide for boaters to help keep South Carolina's fish, shellfish, and waters safe.

South Carolina's waters offer boaters unparalleled recreation opportunities. Whether in a yacht, skiff, sailboat, powerboat, dinghy, canoe, or kayak, you can enjoy mile after mile of lakes, rivers, coves, channels, bays, harbors, and open waters. But our boating and water recreation experiences can be spoiled by the pollutants that enter the water from many sources.

Unfortunately, human sewage from recreational boats can add to pollution problems.

Boat sewage introduces disease-carrying bacteria and viruses into the water. Raw or poorly treated sewage can spread disease, contaminate shellfish beds, and lower oxygen levels in water. Waterborne diseases, including hepatitis, typhoid, and cholera, can be transmitted by shellfish.

Organic matter in sewage is decomposed in the water by bacteria. During this process, the bacteria use oxygen. As a result, sewage in the water may deplete the water's oxygen level, causing stress to fish and other aquatic animals.

Shellfish are filter feeders that eat tiny food particles filtered through their gills into their stomachs, along with bacteria from sewage. Shellfish can convey nearly all waterborne diseases to humans.

Water in shellfish areas is regularly tested to determine if shellfish harvested will be safe to eat.

Test results are expressed as the number of bacteria per 100 milliliters (ml) of water. Shellfish beds are closed when the coliform count reaches 14 per 100 ml of water. Public beaches are closed to swimmers when the coliform count reaches 200 per 100 ml of water.

Fish and shellfish are big business. Commercial shellfish harvest contributes an estimated \$ million to the state's economy every year, while recreational collection of shellfish, including clams, oysters, mussels, scallops, crabs, and shrimp, is a popular boaters' pastime.

Many of South Carolina's prime shellfish beds have been affected by elevated levels of raw sewage. Of the acres of public recreational shellfish beds, percent have been closed, downgraded, or restricted due to various sources of contamination since .

Areas most likely to be affected by sewage contamination are sheltered waters with slow circulation rates, waters with significant recreational value, areas set aside for shellfish habitats such as those in Coastal Zone programs, as well as areas designated by the Environmental Protection Agency as "No Discharge Zones."

By disposing of boat sewage at pumpouts or dump stations, YOU will be helping to improve water quality for everyone.

This brochure was produced in cooperation with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Clean Vessel Act Grant Program. For more information and guidelines, contact S. C. Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, (843) 846-9400.

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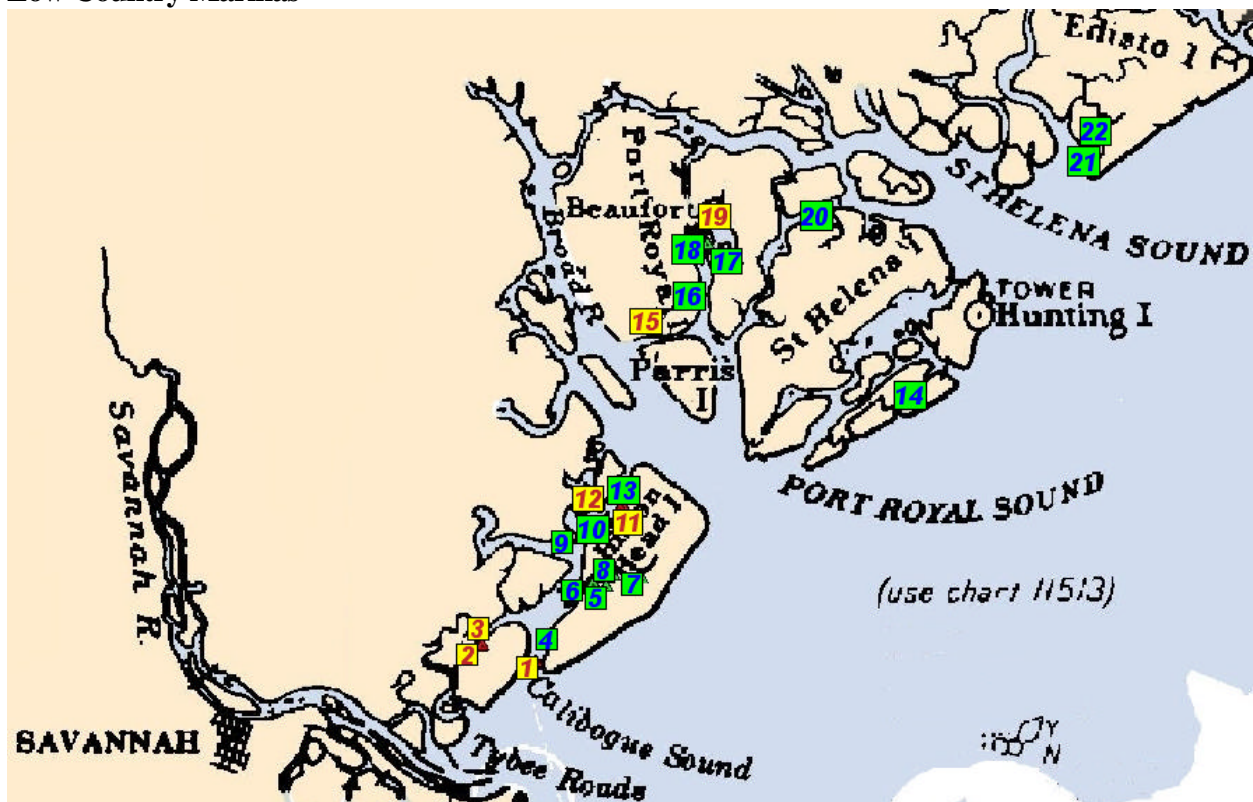
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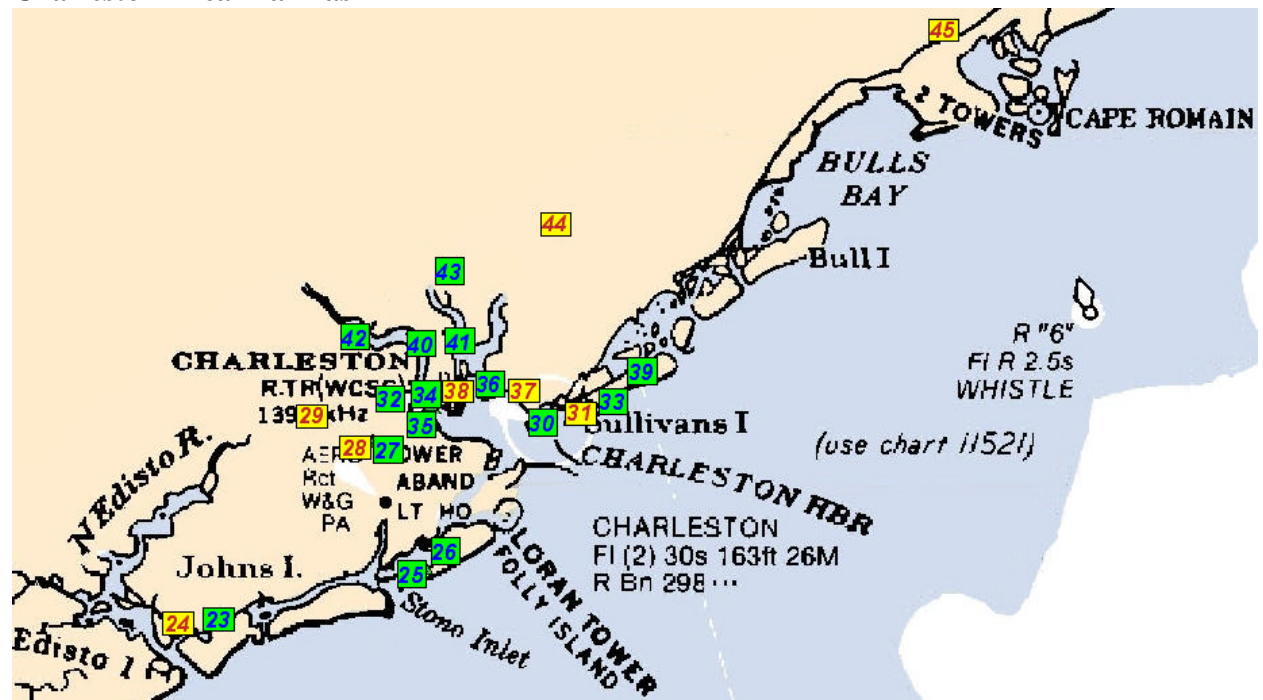
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